

# Bard

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# Bard

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***[for 28 ACRES]***

**And all we want to do  
is make heaven on earth**

**To do so, walk along looking at the sky  
then walk back looking at the ground**

**or just look down—  
*as above, so below***

**the rough terrain you stand on  
is made of God.**

**\***

**As the ancients said  
in their pompous yet comforting way  
there is no heaven  
there is only here,**

**here, she said,  
let me show you around.**

**19 December 2014**

**= = = = =**

**Unpiece the evidence  
fingertip by fingertip  
this place is what it tells you**

**clinamen, asif deciding**

**In this country  
we vote with our feet**

**the land lets you belong  
or be long,  
lets you take part**

**the land is what's left of me  
the bird said, flew away, left  
not even his shadow behind.**

**19 December 2014**

= = = = =

Imagine me waiting  
then wonder  
                    What is it for,  
such a window  
and why?

                    The vacant  
always seems close  
you feel the orchestra  
is getting closer  
                    the music  
wants something from me.

Who does it want  
me to be?

The stream outside is loud  
its own dialect  
to hear in dream,  
not white sound  
                    something bluer  
browner clearer cleaner  
something music forgot

when Apollo snatched my pipes away  
but left my skin

**for a little while longer intact.**

**Is that just dreamstuff, the dust  
printed in books,**

**sweet everlasting lies?**

**The orchestra roiling,  
something's coming,**

**isn't it strange to be alive  
after so many deaths?**

**19 December 2014  
listening to Martinu's 1<sup>st</sup>**

## BY THE WATERS OF METAMBESEN

Wooden duck  
tail feathers prompt  
above a stream  
where other species only.

Play. Words are meant  
for that, to please gods  
aloft or abaft with our jabber,  
our sweet nothings  
chanted to the empty air  
in pure praise,

praise of being.  
Allegro always, the horses  
prance in the courtyard,  
I hear them, they wake me,  
the bells glong in the steeple,  
the ululations of the muedhdhin  
the rabbi's sighs,

Melville heard them all  
in *Clarel*, his youth  
fumbled through Palestine  
looking for the Holy Land

as if the fields stretching  
south of Albany, the paved

**promenade past the Customs House  
at the Battery, the cobbled  
dangers of New Be'ford  
were not Holy too,**

**dear Christ, this half acre  
of muddy grass on shale  
of mine is Jerusalem,  
this brook is Jordan,  
Ganges, just look down,  
the holy Danube splashing  
my insolent toes,  
my stupid paper coffee cup  
floating on it down  
to the everlasting sea.**

***They asked the Rebbe Why do men no loner see G-d?  
He answered, Because nowadays we walk around never  
looking down.***

**19 December 2014**

## ***(towards 28)***

**All we really have to do  
I said, is stand  
or sit here for a long time  
thinking whatever comes to mind  
then saying it.  
That is Art.**

**But she, swishing the hem  
of her long bluegreen gown  
modestly round her ankles  
as if to caress the very  
grass we stood on (poor  
winter grass, pale, needing  
our affection) answered  
Art is more than that,  
not so relaxed except at first,  
later fierce, fulminating  
in the skull, Homer calls it  
war, *polemos*, and means  
not men fighting with other  
men or the gods or the river  
but with the very things you,  
are you a poet, so revere.  
Not what comes to mind  
but what you do with it, strong  
with measures and with forms,  
knowing how things fit**



**together, how they work  
when you tumble all your thinking  
out onto the ground and begin.  
Where you end is where we start.  
Everything just comes to mind,  
art is what you do with it,  
the hard thing, the other people thing.**

**19 December 2014**

## **DISORDER**

**Getting ready to listen, shape  
a hard word big as a papaya  
and start to say it...**

**graphite**

**the air broken, the light  
disabled, gravity on the fritz,  
a hand reaches out and finds  
*its own skin lurking in the mist***

**as Lovecraft would say**

**nothing has much meaning now  
or too much, the indecisive amorist  
fumbles under the front seat  
and finds a candy wrapper still sticky  
with dust plump on the stickum,**

**what can we do  
with all the world we used**

**gone now like  
the dark chocolate from the paper**

**didn't it somehow turn into him?**

***music lets me remember***

**as I would say,**

**sticking to the script.**

**I wrote the stupid thing I'd better stay with it**

**you could have come to see me**

**but you didn't come**

**birds were in the leafless trees**

**my lap was empty**

**just a few jagged crumbs of tortilla**

**can you call those corn things crumbs?**

**because lunch loves us too**

**why didn't you come**

**why did I bother putting a door in the wall**

**if not for you**

**If not for you**

**I would have left here long ago**

**following the stream to the river**

**river to sea**

**following the sea to the horizon**

**then following the sky**

**there must be more to me than that**

**but the sky said No**

**there's only one you  
(meaning me, I think)  
to go all those directions  
at once to all those many  
destinations, come on  
you can do it, all  
you need is gravity**

**all you need to do is fall.**

**Stumbling is easy  
but falling is the hardest thing of all.**

**19 December 2014**

**= = = = =**

**The people who write old  
came by and caroled  
but we closed the casement—**

**nuff song! we said,  
you need to tell us something**

**but we couldn't hear them if they did.**

**20 December 2014**

= = = = =

Light and the flowers marry on her lap  
there are spiritual forces at work here  
curls of cat fur under the ottoman  
squashed flat, dust on the windowpane  
shimmering with narrative, remember

*black milk of* but he said forget that poem  
too many manings to hold in one girl's head  
maybe people really need dogs after all  
to think about something else, a dog  
is always something else, silence, be nice,

Christians sharpening their adverbs against  
the rule of pleasure, the food tastes different  
something must have happened in the night  
try to remember but we can't, eat, eat,  
grandmother's watching you from the grave.

It's time to change the number system  
it really is, crows flock over the quickway  
through Poughkeepsie signaling that, uncountable  
metonymy, we need a break from school  
the wind will still be there when you get back.

**Such an inspiration to be sung I mean young  
conical habit of the fir trees, steep  
mortgage on our chosen planet where  
everything points up and falls down  
there's history for you, Uncle Fred.**

**Delight in debate? Call Lily for an argument  
Delight in semaphores? Be a train  
hurting between Narrowsburg and Callicoon  
hoot past Geary's boarding house, help the sky  
forget for once its opalescent vacancy**

**If we were people we could play  
but we are little children and must work  
memorizing nonsense while nice nuns  
supervise as we grow fastidious and dumb  
like mail order brides or mistletoe**

**Now do you remember, of course not, nothing  
plus nothing equals something else you can't  
exactly remember but it has roses in it,  
a spinnaker, someone juggling two flags,  
naked dancing in the sea foam—that sort of life.**

**20 December 2014**

= = = = =

**I don't know what I'm seeing  
I'm seeing a circle  
growing less non-committal,**

**willing itself corners  
the way a thirteen-year-old sneaks cigarettes**

**where are your eyes  
it asks me**

**halfway home—  
a square is always a person,  
a family, a consort of edges**

**simultaneously the four faces of God.**

**20 December 2014  
(towards Gret)**



## **TOWARDS SOLSTICE**

**Mercury ahead of the Sun  
racing towards sunstead  
marked features in our discourse  
make me as foreigner, daddy,  
I want my Other.**

**Oh I am so other  
I wear a paper bag tohide my face  
nobody loves me I'm so other**

**but over there it's easy  
joy in the forest among the speechless trees.**

**21 December 2014**

**= = = = =**

**We can make sense of anything  
because sense is something we make**

**we and we alone?**

**A wooden fence  
a kind of miracle  
to be separate and to be near?**

**Birds at the feeder  
no one knows my name.**

**21 December 2014**

## **AT THE OPÉRA**

**There has to be a ballet in the second act  
no matter how many die before the sextet  
brings the first act to a close. Who will dance?  
We know the students at the Imperial School  
are waiting their chance, skinny girls with thick  
thighs, boys unsure about what comes next,  
but all in pretty costumes; swans and foxes.  
But what has that got to do with the Devil,  
or sad tenor who ventures everything to sing  
at the foot of the maiden's tower, the old nun  
who knows everything but won't reveal it,  
the recruiting sergeant's secret love life,  
the Russian pilgrim's sudden suicide?  
The dancers know how to figure it all out,  
the body tells them and they know how to hear.  
But why do we have to put up with all that music?  
Horns and strings distract us from the wisdom  
of muscle and bone and those pale wistful  
faces void of thought but not of meaning.**

**21 December 2014**

**= = = = =**

**Don't worry if I use the word  
God in a poem,  
God will come back,  
the First Explanation  
always comes back  
as one by one the others  
fall away. And no one ever  
looks in the mirror.  
Even though that's why God  
gave men beards to shave  
and made women to be beautiful.**

**We are in a time of the world  
when all the short words  
are in disrepute. Just wait.  
The monosyllable will save us yet.**

**21 December 2014**